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Mar 13, 2009 9:04 am US/Central

Retired Local College Teacher Murdered In Mexico

Joe William Johnson Slain In His Guadalajara Vacation Home

GUADALAJARA (Lake County News-Sun) — A retired College of Lake County instructor was found dead in his vacation home in Mexico on Saturday morning.

Joe William Johnson of Delavan, Wis., who taught French at the college between 1970 and 1995, was found beaten to death in a home he was renovating in downtown Guadalajara.

"This is a supreme tragedy," said Nancy Cook of Lake Villa, a retired CLC art history professor who worked with Johnson and heard about his death over the weekend.

Johnson, 69, led student trips to France through the college from 1984 until he retired.

"He was a sponge for travel. He loved immersing himself in the culture by eating the food, meeting the people and seeing the sights," Cook said.

She saw Johnson in February before he returned to Mexico to continue working on his home. He traveled frequently between Delavan and Guadalajara.

"He fell in love with Mexican culture and became fluent in Spanish," she said.

He had owned a condo in Puerto Vallarta before buying property in Guadalajara last fall.

Interested in architecture and preservation, Johnson used to run the Allyn Mansion Inn, a bed-and-breakfast in Delavan, with his partner. An avid antique collector, the inn was decorated with furniture from the late 1800s.

Johnson's body was discovered on a bed in his Guadalajara home on Saturday, said Cristina Guzman, a spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office in Guadalajara. Due to the construction in the home, it was difficult to determine if it had been a forced entry or if anything had been stolen. No arrests have been made, Guzman said.

The U.S. Consulate in Guadalajara confirmed Johnson's death and has been in touch with the family to ship Johnson's remains to the United States.

"In Guadalajara, it is not a very common occurrence to have Americans killed," said Christopher Teal, the press and cultural attache for the U.S. Consulate. "Guadalajara has been one of the safer areas."

By Ryan Pagelow / Lake County News-Sun

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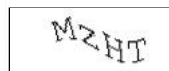
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